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Chairperson: Ms. Lintonen ..... (Finland)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 54: Sustainable development (*continued*) (A/62/343, A/62/356, A/62/486 and A/C.2/62/L.5)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*) (A/62/262 and A/62/376)

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(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twenty-fourth session (*continued*) (A/62/25 (Supp. No. 25))

(h) Sustainable mountain development (*continued*) (A/62/292)

(i) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy (*continued*) (A/62/208 and A/C.2/62/8)

1. **Mr. El-Habr** (United Nations Environment Programme), replying to a question posed by the representative of Pakistan at the previous meeting on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that there had been two reasons for the delay in the distribution of the report of the Secretary-General on the oil slick on Lebanese shores (A/62/343). First, it had taken time to receive and collate the findings from various agencies, a measure that usefully provided up-to-date, objective information on the status of implementation of the resolution and covered social, economic and environmental issues. Second, additional time had been needed for further consultations with interested stakeholders in Lebanon. He apologized once again for the delay.

2. **Mr. Diarra** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) said that the 2005 Mauritius International Meeting had recognized that the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, established in Barbados, had faltered. Sustainable development was far from attained, and, more than two years on, progress on implementation of the Programme was still slow; and yet small island developing States' achievement of the Millennium Development Goals depended on effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation.

3. According to the economic vulnerability index maintained by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), small island developing States were 34 per cent more economically vulnerable than other developing countries, largely owing to their exposure to natural disasters and the very limited range of their exports. Since the Mauritius International Meeting on Small Island Developing States, hurricanes, cyclones and tsunamis had ravaged small islands, serving as stark reminders of their vulnerability. Although the Mauritius Strategy addressed the issue of vulnerability and the need to build resilience to natural disasters in those States, most of them had neither the resources nor the capacity to evaluate risk relating to climate change, nor the ability to adapt to potential changes. International cooperation and partnerships were therefore critical to their success.

4. His Office was willing to cooperate on improving the frequency and efficiency of the meetings of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group, whose purpose was to ensure that small island developing States' priority concerns were mainstreamed into the work of the United Nations family. Coordinated action by all actors was needed at the national, regional and global levels to ensure implementation of the wide-ranging Barbados Programme of Action, and intergovernmental regional organizations also played a pivotal role. The

outcomes of the Commission on Sustainable Development must result in meaningful assessments and decisions and recommendations that furthered action on the Mauritius Strategy.

5. Mobilization of support and resources for the Mauritius Strategy took place at different levels and through a variety of channels, including through the advocacy of his Office at multilateral forums and his direct high-level contacts with donors and other actors. His Office also urged donors to meet their international commitments, supported specific projects developed in partnerships with regional and other United Nations organizations and helped to identify and sensitize specific funding sources to the needs of small island developing States.

6. In 2007, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) had embarked on preparations to address the small island developing States' concerns at deliberations that would result in a post-2012 climate change regime. Adaptation, mitigation, technology and finance to address global warming and sea-level rise must be discussed at the forthcoming session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Bali, and at the proposed 2009 meeting to be held in Denmark on a post-Kyoto international agreement on climate change. His Office supported those preparations, as well as efforts to enhance national capacity and regional organizations and to obtain more appropriate responses and assistance for the advancement of small island developing States.

7. **Mr. Silvestre** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, said that a framework for stabilizing the Earth's atmosphere must be built on a shared conviction that the increase in global mean temperatures must be limited to a maximum of 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, which meant reducing global emissions to one half the 1990 levels as a minimum by 2050.

8. The European Union had already made a firm independent commitment to reduce emissions by at least 20 per cent by 2020 and would commit to a 30 per cent reduction from 1990 levels, provided that other developed countries undertook to make comparable reductions and the more economically advanced developing countries contributed adequately. Adaptation was crucial and needed to be part of all relevant actors' investment policy decisions. Climate change must therefore be fully integrated into strategies for poverty reduction, development planning, and budgeting. The forthcoming Bali Climate Change Conference afforded an ideal opportunity for transforming the current political momentum into deeds and for establishing a clear road map towards a multilateral, comprehensive, coherent and effective post-2012 regime by 2009.

9. The European Union was actively integrating its climate change and energy strategies by adopting clear and ambitious targets for renewable sources and energy efficiency, enshrined in the Energy Policy for Europe and in the Energy Action Plan for the period 2007-2009. Those goals, although challenging, were technologically feasible and economically affordable. Time-bound national and regional targets and commitments were essential to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. On the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the Brundtland Report, it was encouraging to observe that the implementation of sustainable development principles and goals continued at all levels. The European Union was already preparing for the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to ensure that future cycles led to clear, action-oriented outcomes in the pursuit of sustainable development. The European Union was working with its African partners to develop a joint strategic partnership to help Africa, which lagged behind in achievement of the Goals.

10. In view of the momentum provided by the eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa for the Parties' further commitment to reinforce the role of the Convention, the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) would steer the work ahead. Halting the loss of biodiversity was imperative for the European Union, and Portugal, as current President, would shortly host a high-level conference on business and biodiversity for business leaders, biodiversity experts, NGOs and policymakers to establish a reference framework for collaboration and interaction

for biodiversity conservation. The Union would pursue its constructive dialogue with all other parties for the finalization of an international regime on access and benefit-sharing well before the tenth Session of the Conference of the Parties.

11. The heterogeneity of high-altitude microhabitats made for unique mountain ecosystems. In addition to their often distinctive flora and fauna, they were a rare reserve of valuable minerals and water, with exceptional potential for forestry and agriculture development and management, as well as tourism and recreation. And yet most mountain regions were politically and economically marginalized and their populations clearly disadvantaged. Following the International Year of Mountains in 2002, the European Union had appealed for the continuation of efforts to increase global awareness of the importance of mountains and highlighted the importance of pro-poor policies for ensuring their sustainable development. It also supported strengthening the right of mountain women to resources and their role in their communities and culture, encouraging the development of further mountain-related national committees on equal access to resources for men and women.

12. The European Union reiterated its commitment to the Mauritius Declaration and the Mauritius Strategy and stressed the solidity and intensity of the age-old relationship between small island developing States and the Union. It would continue to support their endeavours to tackle the many threats and challenges they faced and to implement the Mauritius Strategy and attain the Millennium Development Goals. But those States must ensure that their problems were adequately reflected in the framework of EU-SIDS cooperation for 2007-2013. Given the risks that sea-level rise and climate change entailed for their sustainable development — indeed their very existence — the European Union was preparing appropriate strategies and promoting a global partnership alliance, with special emphasis on small island States and least developed countries.

13. He welcomed the increased focus on disaster risk reduction, in which connection the European Union supported the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, an effective tool for reducing vulnerability to natural hazards and mitigating the effects of climate change. In that regard, the new Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction was the main forum of a strengthened International Strategies for Disaster Reduction system, while the results of the Global Survey of Early Warning Systems were commendable.

14. The European Union looked forward to further definition of the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in climate change issues and underscored the importance of the decisions on chemicals management taken at the twenty-fourth session of the UNEP Governing Council. The Union also advocated broadening its financial base in the interests of coherence and effectiveness of international environmental policymaking and commended work already under way on a robust UNEP medium-term strategy for 2010-2013. He welcomed the ongoing informal consultative process on the international environmental governance system, which called for more ambitious reform and should transform UNEP into the United Nations Environment Organization.

15. The current year had witnessed a radical shift of the world's population from rural to predominantly urban areas and accentuated the role of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in helping Member States towards attainment of Goal 11 on slum upgrading and prevention. The complexity and urgency of the issue required the collaboration of all parties at all levels and renewed commitment to implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The Union therefore welcomed the UN-Habitat Governing Council's adoption of the results-based Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008-2013.

16. **Ms. Coye-Felson** (Belize), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the region's economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being derived from natural resources, and its discrete ecosystems not only provided food, fresh water, fuels and other raw materials, but were also crucial to many livelihoods and helped maintain functions that provided defences against natural disasters and diseases. Accordingly, island biodiversity was critical to small island developing States. Climate posed the most serious challenges to the sustainable development of CARICOM countries, and the dire effects of the rising sea level and the sea surface temperature could devastate the Caribbean's isolated economies. It was therefore imperative to build resilience, especially in the most vulnerable developing

countries, by developing and transferring new technologies and reinvigorating and sustaining cooperation; that called for an integrated approach to development planning that took environmental risk into account. In that connection, she commended the European Union for its observations and thanked the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNEP for their capacity-building initiatives in the region.

17. The Community also called for international support for its efforts to mainstream adaptation into development in order to address the region's extreme vulnerability to climate change through the provision of additional and predictable financial and technical resources, as well as support for the new programme on island biodiversity and for the project undertaken by the Caribbean Emergency Disaster Response Agency to enhance disaster management effectiveness by identifying innovative information and communication technology applications.

18. CARICOM appealed for the removal of barriers to the use of renewable energy, and for the promotion of its development and commercialization. It sought support for its regional programme and for the development of incentives and financing mechanisms for promoting renewable sources of energy as an integral part of sustainable development. CARICOM reiterated the calls for the full and effective implementation of Agenda 21 and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and, more particularly, the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, which were vital for addressing the sustainable development of small island and low-lying coastal developing countries. While the Community welcomed efforts to mainstream the Mauritius Strategy, it again urged the Secretary-General to implement the General Assembly mandate to strengthen the Small Island Developing States Unit so that it could adequately coordinate implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

19. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) said that climate change and desertification remained inextricably linked and had cost his country 50 per cent of its vegetation and 95 per cent of its tree cover during the previous millennium, a process that Iceland had gradually reversed. It was now channelling its experience into an international training programme on land restoration and soil conservation that had begun in 2007 with a course on soil conservation for experts from developing countries and, by 2008, would offer training in soil conservation, land restoration and sustainable development.

20. Improving energy services in developing countries was one means of eradicating poverty. The international community faced the challenge of finding a way to safeguard the world's ecosystems while raising the level of development and fostering economic growth. Over the long term, countries would have to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels and substantially expand the consumption of renewables.

21. An enabling policy framework and leadership were required to promote the use of renewable energy sources, and the international financial institutions should be encouraged to raise the profile of renewables in their lending strategies. Geothermal energy and hydropower accounted for over 70 per cent of Iceland's primary energy consumption. His country had a long-standing commitment to international cooperation for the sustainable use of energy, and the Geothermal Training Programme of the United Nations University, hosted by Iceland, was valuable for sharing expertise with developing countries, while the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) was supporting the development of geothermal potential in Uganda and Nicaragua. More recently, Iceland had begun participating in the African Rift Geothermal Development Facility run by UNEP, the Global Environment Facility and the World Bank.

22. Small island developing States were least responsible for, and yet most vulnerable to, climate change. Iceland, which shared many of their concerns regarding sustainable development, was committed to promoting the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. It had already spent over US $1.7 million on related projects and intended to organize two high-level forums in 2008 — one in the Caribbean and one in the Pacific — for officials, business leaders, scientists and university experts on Iceland's and small island developing States' approach to the sustainable use of natural resources. An Icelandic company was involved in a geothermal district heating project in China, and Reykjavik Energy Invest would be investing US $150 million in geothermal development in Africa over the next five years, starting in Djibouti.

23. **Mr. Pataki** (United States of America) said that although sustainable development was among the most important cross-cutting issues facing the global

community, successful development strategies also required education, the rule of law, human freedom and economic opportunity. The United States, which was a major economy and a major emitter of greenhouse gases, took the challenges of climate change and energy security seriously. The world must produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions, and must do so in a way that did not undermine economic growth or prevent nations from delivering greater prosperity for their people.

24. His country had recently hosted the inaugural Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change. The participants, the world's largest energy users, developed and developing countries alike, would strive to build a broader consensus on a new international approach to energy security and climate change in 2008 that would contribute to a global agreement by 2009 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. At the first meeting, the President of the United States had proposed the creation of a new international clean energy fund to help developing countries harness the power of clean energy technologies. The Major Economies Meeting was not intended to replace discussions of climate change within the United Nations, which had participated in the Meeting as a full partner. His country would continue to be an active participant in discussions of the issue in the United Nations. His delegation joined others in urging the Committee to restore the tradition of consensus in adopting the current session's resolution on protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind. Doing so would send a hopeful signal of unity to the forthcoming Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

25. Turning to the question of disaster reduction, he underscored the importance of incorporating disaster reduction strategies in all sustainable development plans. His delegation looked forward to receiving further information from the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction regarding its new modular work plan, which might make it easier for major donors to identify and support specific disaster reduction programmes. The United States would also welcome an update on the work of the new Programme Advisory Committee of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

26. UNEP continued to have a strong comparative advantage in such areas as environmental data collection, monitoring and assessment, chemicals and regional seas and coastal zone management. UNEP was working actively with UNDP and other bodies on the Poverty and Environment Initiative, and its participation in the United Nations Development Group and the revitalized Environment Management Group marked important progress in improving the delivery of sustainable development and environment programmes.

27. The existing system of multilateral environmental agreements reflected a good balance of coordination and decentralization, and his delegation remained firm in its view that the Committee should fully respect the independent legal status of the agreements.

28. **Mr. Duong Hoai Nam** (Viet Nam) said that natural disasters and other climate-related hazards had taken a vast toll, particularly in developing countries. Such disasters must be confronted on a global scale and in the context of the international development agenda, in the interest of devising a sustainable long-term solution to disaster risk reduction. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the convening in July 2007 of the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. States must work together to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 and integrate the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction into their national sustainable development plans in the areas of energy efficiency, renewable energy, biofuel use, forest coverage, and the dissemination and transfer of clean and low-carbon technologies.

29. His delegation commended the Secretary-General for his determination to involve the entire United Nations system in the Organization's work on disaster reduction and climate change. The institutional pillars supporting disaster risk reduction must be strengthened further by reinforcing partnerships between government and non-governmental organizations and between the public and private sectors. The United Nations should play a leading role in making the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system a genuine multi-stakeholder vehicle for promoting and catalysing widespread engagement on disaster risk reduction and climate change issues, and for mobilizing commitment and providing international coordination and guidance to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action. The establishment by the World

Bank of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery was a welcome step in that direction, but much more remained to be done. The United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction required additional resources to support country-level initiatives.

30. Viet Nam was in a region prone to natural hazards and his Government, recognizing that disaster could destroy decades of development gains literally overnight, had invested heavily in a variety of disaster reduction efforts. His country was also actively working with countries in the region and the United Nations specialized agencies to establish systems to monitor risk profiles and develop warning systems.

31. **Ms. Jahan** (Bangladesh) underscored the devastating impact of climate change, which severely impeded the efforts of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Bangladesh was particularly vulnerable to climate change owing to its location in a chronically flood-prone area, and it had adopted a comprehensive framework to operationalize climate risk management and mainstream climate change adaptation. The challenges of climate change must also be addressed more forcefully at the global, regional and subregional levels, inter alia, through forecasting, early warning and information-sharing mechanisms. There was a growing concern that an irreversible climatic shift would displace millions of people worldwide, including in Bangladesh. All nations had a responsibility to assist climate change refugees. In particular, steps should be taken to ensure that the post-Kyoto regime ensured that such refugees were granted the legal rights they would need to provide for their recovery and rehabilitation.

32. Drastic measures were needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and she deplored the remarkable lack of urgency regarding the issue that had prevailed for most of the past two decades. Climate concerns must be mainstreamed into development planning and a balance must be struck between mitigation and adaptation. All major emitters should collectively establish and implement a global target to stabilize the atmosphere over the short, medium and long terms. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities must be upheld, and the post-Kyoto regime must be based on more concrete, realistic and legally binding emissions reduction targets.

33. The clean development mechanism provided for in the Kyoto Protocol was not reaching all developing countries equally, in particular, the least developed countries. The launching of the Nairobi Framework to promote their participation in the mechanism was therefore a welcome initiative. In order to promote carbon-neutral economic growth, developed countries must commit to transferring environmentally friendly technologies on preferential terms on a scale that matched the evolving requirements of developing countries, especially the least developed countries. The post-Kyoto regime must generate new funds for that purpose on concessional terms to help countries to secure their energy requirements.

34. Developing countries also required sufficient targeted funding on affordable terms over the long term in order to be able to develop the capacity to adapt to climate change. The existing resource pool remained perennially inadequate. The full and effective operationalization of the Special Climate Change Fund under the Kyoto Protocol was critically important. Innovative financial instruments, such as weather derivatives to help vulnerable communities reduce their coping costs, would also be welcome. Current and post-Kyoto adaptation needs should be met with specific commitments and should not be financed at the expense of ODA. In addition, funding for climate adaptation should be fast-tracked and the principle of equity must be upheld so as to ensure that the most vulnerable countries received proportionately more resources earmarked for adaptation.

35. **Mr. Ngor** (Sudan) underscored the severity of desertification in many countries and welcomed the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. His delegation hoped that the forthcoming extraordinary session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention would resolve the budget-related issues hindering the implementation of the Convention. Adequate and predictable funding was a major requirement to help developing countries combat desertification and build national capacity.

36. Soil degradation posed an imminent threat to domestic, regional and international stability by impeding poverty eradication efforts and creating competition for scarce resources. Moreover, as indicated in the Sudan Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment prepared by UNEP, just as environmental

degradation could contribute to the triggering and perpetuation of conflict, the sustainable management of natural resources could provide the basis for long-term stability, sustainable livelihoods and development.

37. He cited many statistics that highlighted the negative impact of drought and desertification in his country over three decades. Sudan had adopted national plans to address those problems beginning in 1978. Moreover, it had been among the first countries to sign the Convention to Combat Desertification and was a founding member of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which had been established in 1986 by six East African States in response to recurrent and severe drought and other natural disasters in the region. The most important lesson derived from the experience of IGAD was that drought and desertification could not be effectively dealt with in isolation from other economic, social and political dimensions in the countries or regions concerned and that regional and subregional organizations could play a significant role if they were supported by other international stakeholders.

38. **Mr. Pankin** (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation had always been part of the international efforts led by the United Nations to implement Agenda 21, the decisions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the relevant goals of the 2005 World Summit. Positive developments in the current year had included the proposal from Switzerland and Mexico, the co-chairs of the consultations on environmental governance, of a range of options for further actions for reforming the environmental sector with a description of each option and an assessment of the practical implementation needs under current conditions.

39. UNEP continued to play a key role in tackling pressing environmental problems, and the twenty-fourth session of its Governing Council had produced valuable results. The potential of UNEP was far from exhausted and in that context he welcomed the measures taken in the past year to optimize its structure. At the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, important decisions had been taken on the programme of work and the implementation of a non-legally binding instrument on forests of all types, which would take the international forest process to a qualitatively new level. The recent High-level Event on Climate Change had shown that there was political support for joint international efforts to counter climate change. The forthcoming session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, to be held in Bali, would surely make a significant contribution to developing a road map for international cooperation on those issues after 2012. The Russian Federation was prepared to play an active role in that joint effort.

40. He welcomed the results of the recent session of the Conferences of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The outcome of the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which had considered the issues of energy, climate change, industrial development and atmospheric pollution, had been disappointing. It had not been possible to find solutions politically acceptable to all countries and that sad lesson should be taken into account in the new cycle of meetings.

41. In relation to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the increase in the number and scale of natural disasters made international cooperation on disaster reduction even more important. The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction was an appropriate forum for continuing international cooperation on those issues. It was important to maintain the informal and non-politicized nature of the dialogue in the context of the Global Platform and effective working relations should be established between the Platform and the General Assembly. He supported the Secretary-General's recommendations on the need to integrate disaster reduction activities into the work of the United Nations development system, and particularly UNDP. He welcomed the establishment by the World Bank of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. The joint efforts of international cooperation partners and national governments would enhance consideration of the relevant issues in development programmes and would reduce the vulnerability of the planet's population.

42. **Mr. Llanio González Pérez** (Cuba) said that, notwithstanding the rapidly accelerating pace of global climate change and environmental degradation, the international community was still far from achieving its goal of ensuring environmental sustainability by 2015. He cited a number of statistics illustrating the extremely dire situation with respect to those crucial issues. There were no indications that the developed

countries had the intention or political will to honour their moral obligation and historical responsibility to take the lead in remedying the situation. Moreover, they failed to recognize the principle of common but differentiated responsibility or to adequately reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases. The environmental crisis could not be solved by purchasing the emissions quotas of developing countries or, as proposed by the President of the United States, by promoting the use of biofuels. The latter course of action would seriously compromise world food security, distort commodity markets and cause further environmental degradation.

43. The developed countries must meet their international commitments particularly the Kyoto Protocol, without further delay. They must also honour their commitment to devote 0.7 per cent of GNP to ODA. It was essential to foster genuine multilateral cooperation on the basis of the principles of solidarity, complementarity and mutual benefit, with a view to achieving the goals set out in Agenda 21, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Millennium Development Goals.

44. Special attention must be devoted to small island developing States, which were particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and lacked adequate safe water resources. It was essential to strengthen their ability to adapt to climate change, including by helping them with technology and human resources development and capacity-building.

45. **Mr. Ehouzou** (Benin) pointed out that desertification, particularly in Africa, worsened poverty, caused migration and increased food insecurity. When people lived in poverty, they had virtually no choice but to over-exploit the ground and when finally, the earth could no longer be worked profitably, they were often forced to leave their lands and migrate elsewhere. For Benin, the fight against desertification and the promotion of development were one and the same endeavour. Most households in Benin cooked and heated exclusively with wood, and recent studies indicated that that practice, combined with slash-and-burn farming, was stripping an average of 100,000 hectares of vegetation cover from the savannahs every year. It was expected that the vast quantities of carbon dioxide released would go on increasing in line with the rise in energy needs, itself resulting from the growth in the population. If energy production and agricultural practice were not changed, desertification would extend to the wooded savannahs and the carbon dioxide that they were holding would be released into the atmosphere as well.

46. His Government supported investments in the environmental sector, intended to increase its people's environmental awareness, to incorporate the environmental dimension into sectoral strategies and projects and to decentralize sustainable management of the environment. Benin could be regarded as a country with a moderate investment risk, having political stability and a strong national identity, a steady economy and competitive production costs. It was therefore confident that development partners would demonstrate their commitment to the Rio Principles by increasing their assistance to and investments in the countries of Africa and the least developed countries, such as Benin. Greater efforts were also needed in the areas of capacity-building and financial support to bring about adaptation to climate change, in particular through the development and transfer of clean technologies. In the short term, capacity-building should relate to implementation of an integrated early warning system for climatic variability and climate change, and enhancement of climate monitoring networks to allow ongoing updating of climate data.

47. The developed countries, including the United States of America, should offer concessions that would make it possible, over time, to adopt actual numerical commitments for the post-2012 reduction of greenhouse gases. The linkages between desertification and biodiversity on the one hand and climate change on the other should be studied with a view to finding ways to relieve the powerful pressures exerted upon the natural resources of the African countries by energy needs, agricultural activities and demographics.

48. National action plans for implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, and/or national plans for adaptation to climate change, had yet to become operational. That would require additional resources, in particular from the Global Environment Facility, on a scale sufficient to permit the developing countries to finance the implementation of the various environmental conventions and thereby to create conditions favourable to sustainable development in all its social, economic and environmental aspects.

49. **Archbishop Migliore** (Observer for the Holy See) suggested that protecting the environment meant more than defending it. It implied a more positive

vision of the human being, who was no longer a threat to the environment, but someone who held himself responsible for its care and management. Viewed in that way, there was no conflict between the human being and the environment, but, rather an inseparable alliance, in which the environment essentially conditioned man's life and development, while the human being perfected the environment by his or her creative activity.

50. At its core, the environmental crisis was a moral challenge, one that called upon mankind to examine how it used and shared the goods of the earth and what it passed on to future generations. It meant that mankind's ever-increasing power over nature must be accompanied by an equally growing responsibility for it. Issues of environmental protection, development models and social equity were inextricably intertwined, so that, for instance, while mankind sought to find the best way to combine environmental protection and sustainable development, it must also work for justice within societies and among nations. In most countries, it was the poor and powerless who most directly bore the brunt of environmental degradation, living in polluted lands or squatting on public ground without any access to basic services. Likewise, subsistence farmers cleared woodlands in order to survive, thereby perpetuating a vicious circle of poverty and environmental degradation.

51. However, all was not gloom. There were encouraging signs of mankind's growing awareness of the interrelatedness of the challenges facing it. The predictions of disastrous consequences of climate change had brought home the urgency of caring for the environment. Environmental degradation caused by certain economic models had revealed to many that development was not achieved through a mere quantitative increase in production, but through a balanced approach including respect for the rights of workers and protection of the environment.

52. It was earnestly to be hoped that those positive signs could lead to a consolidated vision of human progress that was consistent with respect for nature, and to a greater international solidarity in which responsibility for environmental protection was equitably shared between the developed and the developing countries. It was incumbent upon authorities to translate those promising signs into public policies capable of reversing and preventing environmental decay, while pursuing the goal of sustainable development for all. But laws alone did not bring about behavioural change: it also required personal commitment and the ethical conviction of the value of solidarity. Achieving change demanded a more equitable relationship between rich and poor countries, and imposed special obligations on large-scale industrial structures, both in developed and in developing nations, to take measures for environmental protection.

53. **Ms. von Lilien-Waldau** (International Fund for Agricultural Development) noted that climate change was expected to increase the rate of desertification in coming years. With desertification and land degradation being both causes and consequences of rural poverty, the best way to protect natural resources was through rural development to lift poor farmers and herders out of hunger and poverty. Those farmers — 1.5 billion of the world's population who managed vast areas of the Earth's surface — played an important role in combating desertification and land degradation, and had to be part of the response to the challenge of mitigating climate change.

54. With the world preparing to take more definitive steps to address climate change, the existence of the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance implementation of the Convention, recently adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, was especially welcome. It was to be hoped that the plan would focus the attention of international donors on the issues of land degradation and would increase understanding in policymakers and the public that sound land management not only mitigated climate change but was one of the most effective ways to reduce rural poverty and increase development.

55. As part of broader resource mobilization in support of the implementation of the Convention, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) had expanded its access to Global Environmental Facility (GEF) resources. In June 2007, the GEF Council had recognized that, in addition to sustainable land management, IFAD had developed the capacity to work in other GEF focal areas, such as biodiversity and adaptation to climate change. Following a recent review of the GEF focal areas, the inclusion of land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) in the GEF climate change "window" opened interesting prospects for affected countries to mitigate the effects of climate change.

56. IFAD hoped that the Convention's Committee on Science and Technology would help to develop a better understanding of the links between LULUCF and carbon emissions savings and, in particular, which practices most benefited smallholder farmers, foresters and rural communities, with a view to linking those producers with carbon markets, which were in their early stages in developing countries. The sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development would provide an important opportunity for focusing coordinated attention on drought and desertification, and on the need to invest in sustainable agricultural practices, including sustainable land management.

57. As custodians of natural resources and vast areas of land and forests, poor rural people were key players in designing and implementing measures that curbed and reversed desertification. It was important to ensure that political leaders recognized that soil was the largest reservoir in the terrestrial carbon cycle and that poor rural farmers were therefore a critical part of the solution to the world's environmental crises.

58. **Mr. Aluteni** (Namibia) said that the challenge for his country was to manage its fragile ecology while taking measures to curb desertification, which had drastically increased vulnerability to frequent droughts that caused livestock losses and reduced grain production, threatening the livelihoods of poor farmers and rural communities in general. Additional challenges to the ecosystem were deforestation, overgrazing, deterioration of rangelands and bush encroachment, as well as the illegal harvesting of desert plants. To address those problems, his Government was promoting the sustainable and equitable development of natural resources for the benefit of both present and future generations. It promoted environmental sustainability through improved land use by supporting communal land boards and promoting land-based approaches to livelihood. Viewing research and training as key elements in the process of combating desertification, it had expended substantial resources on training in areas such as community-based natural resource management.

59. Even as it combated desertification, Namibia remained proud of the beauty of its deserts, which over the years had sustained numerous exotic species of fauna and flora, as well as providing opportunities for adventurous tourism. Namibia would never be the same without its deserts: indeed, without the Namib Desert, even the country's name would have no meaning.

60. While Namibia's geographical location and climate provided ample opportunities for it to become a leader in the sustainable use of new and renewable energy technologies, its small and scattered population made it unfeasible to establish conventional electricity supply networks across the country. Use of stand-alone new and renewable energy technologies was therefore a viable option for off-grid energy provision and a contribution to ensuring security of supply. Additionally, expanded use of renewable energy could help the country to realize the third pillar of sustainable development, namely environmental protection, as well as contribute to climate stabilization efforts through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

61. Lack of access to energy was a serious impediment to socio-economic development and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. Currently, although Namibia had achieved about 70 per cent electrification in urban centres, the figure was only 15 per cent in rural areas. New and renewable energy sources in Namibia included 30,000 wind-driven water pumps, and solar technologies were being used for lighting, basic appliances, and water pumping and heating. The possibility of generating electricity through ocean wave technologies along the country's long coastline was also being explored.

62. One of the main challenges to the use of new and renewable sources of energy was the high initial investment required, since nearly all the equipment had to be imported. To address that challenge, the Government had established the Solar Revolving Fund. Through affordable microfinancing arrangements, the Fund enables low-income groups to acquire renewable energy technologies. Vocational training centres now included new and renewable energy training in their curricula, and a Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Institute had been established at the Polytechnic of Namibia to serve as an information hub.

63. **Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia) said that sustainable development was about holding the world in trust for future generations, which entailed a need to strengthen the economic, social and environmental pillars of development. For developing countries, achieving that objective remained one of the greatest challenges: it was extremely difficult to get people to live sustainably if their focus was to escape poverty, or even just to

survive. And the challenge had become even greater with the threat of climate change, which, according to the scientific evidence, would lead to more inequalities, in health care and in access to food and clean water.

64. While the Kyoto Protocol had been a good start, more aggressive measures based on common but differentiated responsibility were necessary, but taking them would demand political will. His delegation commended the initiative of the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General in convening a thematic debate on climate change, and holding the High-level Event on Climate Change in September respectively. Yet there was still a long way to go. It was to be hoped that the forthcoming Bali Climate Change Conference would launch a new era in climate change, one of long-term political investment and long-term action. Action on climate change did not mean lowering people's quality of life, but it did require changing their way of life. An effective response must strike a balance between mitigation and adaptation. Developed countries should continue to take the lead in committing to ever greater emissions reductions. Greater international cooperation in technology and investment was also needed to support developing countries' transition to clean economies.

65. The tropical rainforest countries recognized that the fight against climate change would be lost if rainforests were also lost. Consequently, the President of Indonesia had convened a meeting of tropical rainforest countries during the High-level Event. That initiative had launched a collaborative effort to highlight the deforestation issue in the future climate change regime, while fully taking into account the economic and social needs of the rainforest countries.

66. Many countries had been facing the unforgiving forces of natural hazards for years, but vulnerability had been accentuated with the rising climatic risks, and the economic costs of disasters had severely constrained the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. In that context, stronger national capacities, investment in disaster risk reduction and predictable and stable financial resources for disaster reduction instruments would be more crucial than ever. However important it was to strive for the accelerated progress of international commitments such as those contained in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, it was also necessary to factor in the costs of combating climate change, which was more than just an environmental problem. It was a civilizational problem, and human civilization would be in peril if immediate action was not taken. The determination of all countries to address the adverse effects of climate change seriously had never been stronger: the momentum must not be wasted.

67. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that sustainable development was a challenge and a priority for countries such as hers with a wealth of natural resources. Although Colombia was a medium-sized country, its location between the tropics gave it such a variety of geographical areas and climates and profusion of water and forest resources that it was among the five most mega-diverse countries in the world, hosting about 10 per cent of existing biodiversity in terms of ecosystems and species.

68. Her country's domestic policies were designed to ensure the sustainable use and management of natural resources. Its environmental legislation was among the oldest in Latin America and included a national plan for sustainable forest management, a national system of protected areas and a national policy on biodiversity consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity. Substantial human and financial resources had been invested in environmental protection. Such commitments should receive greater recognition and support from the international community. Sustainable development presented challenges that could only be met through solidarity, and joint efforts in that field would benefit humanity as a whole.

69. Climate change had direct effects on the economic and social development of vulnerable countries such as Colombia, which could also play a role by taking voluntary mitigatory action. The Committee's discussions should promote major international support for the adaptation needs of developing countries and for discretionary mitigatory measures.

70. Another Colombian initiative deserving international recognition was the Forester Families Programme, which would soon include 80,000 families remunerated by the State to help protect 57.8 million hectares of tropical forest from deforestation and illicit drug cultivation. The Programme contributed to climate stabilization on a global scale and would require international financial support for its expansion. The issue of sustainable forest management

should be given greater visibility in international discussions on climate change. The negotiations to take place in Bali and the deliberations on a post-2012 regime would offer an ideal opportunity to reflect on that issue.

71. The resolution on the Convention on Biological Diversity should give a political boost to the international tasks still pending in that area. A clear message should be given to encourage the prompt negotiation of an international binding regime on access to genetic resources and the benefits deriving from their use. Benefit distribution should be emphasized rather than access regulation, which was mainly the competence of domestic legislations.

72. In relation to the international promotion of renewable energy sources, Colombia had made significant progress in promoting the sustainable production and use of bio-fuels from sugar cane and African palm tree crops. Those crops grew in savannah areas without causing deforestation or food security risks, thus maximizing their environmental and social and economic benefits.

73. Colombia was also interested in the discussions on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. States were responsible for protecting their populations and national efforts should be strengthened by intensifying bilateral, regional and international cooperation. Such cooperation should include technical and financial assistance and promote institutional capacity-building and the development of early warning systems in the countries.

74. Colombia was committed to environmental protection, economic development and social development as the three fundamental pillars of sustainable development, and would make the best use of existing forums, including the Commission on Sustainable Development. Despite the lack of tangible results at its fifteenth session, the Commission was still an appropriate forum for addressing the topic from a holistic perspective.

75. **Mr. Gass** (Switzerland) said that the inability of the Commission on Sustainable Development to adopt a final document at its fifteenth session despite two weeks of intense discussion and negotiation should serve as a warning for States to breathe new life into the Commission so that it could carry out its mandate.

76. He welcomed the progress made during the last session of the UNEP Governing Council, including the decision to create a working group to consider stricter voluntary measures and the use of existing or new international legal instruments in relation to mercury. The water policy and strategy adopted had emphasized the importance of ecosystems for integrated water resources management, and reference had been made for the first time to payment for ecosystem services as part of that management. Those innovative economic instruments would be increasingly important not only for the area of water management but also for biological diversity and climate issues.

77. The efforts made for international environmental governance should result in a strengthening of UNEP or a change in its statute. Participation could be made universal, in accordance with modalities yet to be defined, so that all States could submit proposals and be active in the work of the Programme. There was a gap between the global problems the international community was facing, such as climate change, and the capacity of existing institutions to resolve them. One important challenge was to strengthen climate governance and integrate it into existing processes, strategies and action plans.

78. In relation to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 had become a priority for a growing number of stakeholders. More efforts were needed to integrate disaster risk reduction, including ecosystems management and climate change adaptation, into sustainable development plans. Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 should receive more active support from the private sector and involve civil society, including community organizations more systematically. Member States should review the financing modalities for the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and allocate resources for that purpose from the regular budget.

79. As poverty was often more acute in mountain regions, those areas played a crucial role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and should be given higher priority in national, regional and global policymaking for sustainable development. Mountains were an important source of positive externalities such as biodiversity, flood and soil protection, water quality and supply, carbon sequestration, avalanche protection, fire protection, cultural landscapes, outdoor recreation

and cultural heritage. Pro-poor national and international policies and financing instruments should be elaborated and strengthened in order to compensate mountain populations for the provision of such externalities. It was also urgent to address the negative effects of global climate change on the fragile environment of mountain regions.

80. One of the growing challenges facing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was a decreasing level of political support, due partly to the lack of demonstrable progress on the ground and partly to the perception that its debates were polarized. The Convention had to focus on its own institutions in order to keep them effective, but should also examine its role within the international environmental governance system. With an agreed set of priorities at all levels, measurable indicators of progress and a renewed commitment by all parties, the Convention could generate increased benefits for States parties and local stakeholders. His delegation would continue to support implementation of the recently adopted ten-year strategic plan.

81. **Mr. Liu** Zhiyong (China) said that since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Member States had made great strides in coordinated economic development. The trend of global environmental degradation was yet to be reversed, however, and the lack of funding, technology and capacity of most developing countries remained the weakest link in global sustainable development. Both the efforts of developing countries and the vigorous reinforcement of international cooperation would be crucial to that end. In that connection, the international community should fulfil its commitments and provide developing countries with additional funds and environmentally friendly technologies. The role of the Commission on Sustainable Development — the only organ of the United Nations system mandated to consider economic, social and environmental issues in an integrated manner — should be enhanced to provide better policy guidance.

82. Small island developing States were still encountering special difficulties in their sustainable development efforts. Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy required the joint efforts of all countries. The international community should honour its commitments to help small island developing States to enhance capacity-building in line with their characteristics. The United Nations should continue its leading role in promoting the sustainable development of small island developing States. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Land-locked Countries and the Small Island Developing States should mobilize more support and assistance for various forms of partnerships so as to help small island developing States to realize coordinated and sustainable economic, social and environmental development.

83. His Government was continuing and expanding its policy of assisting small island developing States with their sustainable development efforts. At the China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum held in 2006, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao had announced that China would provide 3 billion yuan in loans to the Pacific Island countries over the next three years, which would help them to achieve the relevant goals of the Mauritius Strategy.

84. In recent years, the international community had focused increasingly on disaster reduction cooperation and had achieved considerable progress, including the designation of early warning for disasters as a priority in disaster reduction cooperation. The disaster reduction cooperation system with the United Nations at its core should be improved by adherence to the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality and the strengthening of scientific, technological and information exchanges. Disaster reduction should have long-term, stable and predictable core funding, and support for the Central Emergency Response Fund should be strengthened.

85. In relation to climate change, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should be observed. The developed countries should meet their emissions reduction targets, and the developing countries should adopt positive measures to control their greenhouse gas emissions to the extent possible. The basic framework set forth in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change should be maintained, and international cooperation in the field of climate change should be advanced. Funding assistance and technology transfer to the developing countries should be strengthened instead of only emphasizing the role of the market mechanism.

86. China attached great importance to the issue of climate change and environmental protection was a basic national policy. It had promulgated a series of

laws and regulations and formulated national climate change programmes. President Hu Jintao of China had recently emphasized the need to build an ecological civilization, the building of a resource-saving and environmentally friendly society would be a salient feature of the national development strategy for industrialization, thus contributing to protection of the global climate.

87. Following the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in March and September, respectively. The international community should take action to implement the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention. The developed countries should support the establishment of technology transfer mechanisms on the basis of mutual benefit. His delegation hoped that further progress on desertification would be made at the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

88. The role of UNEP should be strengthened and the reform effort should always be based on the overall framework of sustainable development in the context of United Nations reform in the economic, social and development fields.

89. New and renewable sources of energy played an important role in safeguarding energy security and sustainable development. The international community should adopt a new energy security concept of mutually beneficial cooperation and diversified forms of development, paying particular attention to strengthening cooperation in research and development of key energies such as renewable energy sources and hydrogen and nuclear energy. His Government had always paid great attention to the development and application of new and renewable sources of energy and its energy strategy gave priority to conservation, domestic sources and diversified forms of development. Cooperation with energy producers and consumers would be strengthened according to the principles of equality and mutual benefit in order to maintain sustainable development.

90. **Mr. Razali** (Malaysia) noted that despite the progress made in past years in pursuing sustainable development, the hoped-for integration of environmental issues to development had not yet taken place. Instead, the environment had been deteriorating owing to global warming, biodiversity loss, water crises, hazardous technologies and worsening desertification while unsustainable consumption continued unabated. He welcomed the Secretary-General's call on Governments, organizations of the United Nations system and major groups to continue expediting progress with the sustainable development agenda by exchanging lessons learned and best practices as well as by integrating environmental concerns into the overall development process.

91. Greater commitment by the international community, at the highest political level, and stronger North-South partnerships would be vital to the accelerated implementation of Agenda 21 and the promotion of sustainable development. There was an unprecedented momentum in the struggle to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and the quest for sustainable development was a closely related issue. The success of the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bali in December 2007 would reflect that determination to address climate change and sustainable development issues. The outcome of the Bali Conference should maintain the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. A post-2012 agreement would have to build upon the architecture and other fundamentals of the Kyoto Protocol and include absolute emission reduction targets for developed countries, expanded mechanisms to facilitate contributions from developing countries and special provisions for the least developed countries and small island developing States. Any national or regional initiatives to deal with climate change should not compete with but rather complement the negotiations under the United Nations Framework.

92. With regard to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, a majority of developing countries lacked the capacity and financial resources needed to minimize the impact of disasters on the local population. The relevant United Nations organizations should step up their efforts and their cooperation with Member States in order to ensure that international engagement in disaster management was sustained in the long term and that member countries were prepared to deal promptly with emergencies and natural disasters.

93. The growing exploitation of biologically diverse resources meant that serious attention should be given

to the issue of environmental conservation. Developed countries should provide funds and facilitate technology transfer to enable developing countries to make substantial progress in addressing the loss of biological diversity. Developed countries and the Global Environment Facility should take a more proactive role in providing funding for capacity-building in accordance with the priority needs of developing countries and in supporting their efforts to ratify and implement the Biosafety Protocol. Countries with abundant biodiversity resources and those with the necessary financial means, scientific knowledge and technological expertise should cooperate to develop an equitable solution for tackling bio-piracy.

94. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification enabled Governments to review action programmes regularly by tapping into the experiences of other Member States. Desertification could only be reversed by far-reaching changes at both the local and international levels. The countries affected should continue to receive assistance to implement programmes leading to sustainable land use.

95. He called for enhanced coordination between UNEP and other United Nations agencies and the various multilateral environment agreements, and for concerted efforts by all environmental and environment-related agencies to exchange and share their information and know-how in order to lessen duplication and make more efficient use of resources. A strengthened UNEP could be a central coordinating mechanism for United Nations leadership in assessing the state of the global environment and a forum for contemplating methods to avoid or reduce global environmental risk and elaborating joint norms for sustainable development.

96. As a developing country, Malaysia's growth was highly energy-dependent. While the demand for fossil fuel continued in key energy-consuming sectors, there was a need to plan for a long-term and flexible energy supply strategy, and especially for the development of new and renewable energy sources. Malaysia would promote the use of renewable energy for power generation by industries. It already planned to use biofuel in the transportation sector in order to reduce its dependence on petroleum. Malaysia would also encourage more research and development activities on renewable energy in order to strengthen economic growth and diversify fuel sources. Local, national and international efforts should be increased in order to ensure that renewable energy was included in the quest for sustainable development. States should continue to raise awareness, develop capacity-building and mobilize the necessary means of implementation, including financial resources, technology transfer and investment, in order to ensure that renewable energy played a significant role in the sustainable development process as well as the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions. Sustainable development had to be integrated into all economic activities if the planet's resources were to continue to meet the needs of present and future generations.

97. **Mr. Amin-Mansour** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, at the halfway point to the 2015 target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, it was important to take stock of the progress made thus far in order to expedite collective efforts to reach the Goals and targets in a timely manner. As the various Goals were clearly interrelated and the three pillars of sustainable development were mutually reinforcing and complementary, they should be treated in a balanced and equal manner.

98. According to the Millennium Development Goals Report 2007, progress had been made towards achieving some of the Goals, while others needed further attention. The proportion of people living in extreme poverty had fallen since the period 1990-2004. More children were in school in the developing countries and primary enrolment had risen from 80 per cent in 1991 to 88 per cent in 2005. Women's political participation had been growing, albeit slowly. Child mortality had declined globally. The efforts to control malaria had been expanded and the tuberculosis epidemic appeared to be on the verge of decline. Yet progress was not fast enough to reach the targets by 2015.

99. The lack of adequate progress in certain areas in the past year was a source of great concern. Over half a million women still died each year from treatable and preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth. The number of AIDS deaths worldwide had increased to 2.9 million in 2006, and preventive measures were failing to keep pace with the growth of the epidemic. In the run-up to the International Year of Sanitation, half the population of developing countries lacked basic sanitation. If existing trends continued, the world would miss the target by almost 600 million people. Most economies had failed to provide employment

opportunities to their youth, who were more than three times as likely as adults to be unemployed.

100. The report also referred to disparities within countries, where certain population groups, especially those in rural areas, children of mothers with no formal education and the poorest households, were not making enough progress to meet the targets. The decline in ODA in 2006 would adversely affect developing countries' efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Proper attention should be given to the realization of Goal 8 on developing a global partnership for development.

101. In the past year, his country had participated in several rounds of negotiations on reform of the United Nations in order to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system, based on the 2005 World Summit Outcome. There had been a very sensitive debate on "system-wide coherence" and "strengthening environmental activities". Yet greater enthusiasm and vigilance would be needed in order to ensure that the outcome would help all United Nations entities to work more efficiently and effectively.

102. It was regrettable that the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, held in May 2007, had failed to reach a consensus on policy options and practical measures on energy, industrial development, climate change and air/atmosphere pollution. The adoption of policies and practical measures on those themes could facilitate the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The forthcoming sessions of the Commission should enjoy more cooperation and flexibility, especially on the part of the developed countries, in order to avoid the bitter experience of the fifteenth session. The topics on the agenda of the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions, namely, agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification, were of great importance. They were key elements for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and thus required adequate attention from the international community.

103. UNEP had an important role to play as the principal United Nations body in the field of environment. He emphasized the overall objective of that programme and acknowledged its contribution to the achievement of the internationally agreed goal on environmental sustainability. Referring to the report on the twenty-fourth session of the UNEP Governing Council, he commended the progress achieved in the Programme's normative and analytical work for the management of chemicals and in particular mercury. He welcomed the Governing Council's recommendation to declare 2010-2020 as the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification. The Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building required further attention; the international community, particularly the developed countries, should provide financial and technical assistance to UNEP for its full and timely implementation.

104. The recent High-level Event on Climate Change had provided an important opportunity for the international community to exchange views. Any solution to tackling the problem of climate change should not impede economic and social development in developing countries. His country was prepared to take an active role in the negotiations to be held in December in Bali. The industrialized nations should accept the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and significantly reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. They should also assist the developing countries technically and financially with the formulation and implementation of their adaptation and mitigation policies in the post-Kyoto era.

105. He welcomed the outcome of the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, held in April 2007, at which the Forum's multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015 and a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests had been adopted. Those two decisions constituted remarkable progress in the sustainable management of forests across the globe.

106. He welcomed the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention by the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The extraordinary session of the Conference to be held in November 2007 in New York should take into account the need for additional resources for activities to combat desertification when adopting its future programme and budget.

107. Lastly, disaster risk reduction and building the resilience of communities and nations to disasters should be highlighted on the agenda of the international community. The first session of the

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in June in Geneva, had provided another opportunity for stakeholders to exchange views on progress in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action and identifying priorities for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system for 2008-2009. All natural disasters, including geophysical and hydrological ones, should be treated in a balanced manner in that Strategy.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.